

I rise to recognize and honor the memory of United States Senator *Robert C. Byrd* of West Virginia.

Born in West Virginia, I have known Senator *Byrd* my whole life. Senator *Byrd* faithfully served West Virginia in Congress for more than 57 years. Throughout his career in the House and the Senate, he improved the lives and welfare of the people of West Virginia for whom he cared so much. He worked endlessly to fight for democratic principles, defend the Constitution, and ensure that the American Dream was in reach for all families.

Senator *Byrd* grew up in the southern coalfields of West Virginia, first working as a gas station attendant briefly and then in a local food market. He started his political career in the West Virginia House of Delegates, serving from 1947 to 1950, followed by two years in the West Virginia Senate. After being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1952, he enrolled in night law school classes despite not having a bachelor's degree. In 1958, West Virginia elected him to the U.S. Senate where he became its longest-serving member.

Senator *Byrd* was an energetic defender of the U.S. Senate as an institution, persistently seeking to preserve its dignity and traditions. He literally wrote the book on the Senate--a four-volume history of the institution that is a treasure. To read his books and to read his speeches is to see Senator *Byrd* as a self-taught great orator and historian, someone who could readily quote from Shakespeare, Greek tragedies, and the King James Bible.

I always will remember him for his extraordinary devotion and service to the people of West Virginia. He paid exceptional attention to his constituents and their individual concerns. Staff members told me that at night they would receive calls at home from the Senator, quizzing them on people who had signed his guestbook that day and asking how he could help them. He would recognize people in a crowd and ask them if his constituent service to them years before took care of their problem.

## Commemorating the Honorable Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia

Tuesday, 29 June 2010 00:00

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My thoughts and condolences go out to his daughters, his family, and all of his friends and neighbors in West Virginia. Senator *Byrd* dedicated every day of his service in the U.S. Congress to strengthening the institution and the country that he loved so deeply.

He will be greatly missed. May he rest in peace with his beloved wife Erma.